



# National Network

Information, Guidance and  
Training on the Americans with  
Disabilities Act

Call us toll-free  
1-800-949-4232 V/TTY  
Find your regional center  
at [www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

For the most current and accessible version,  
please visit <https://adainfo.us/aging>

## Aging and the ADA

### What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

The ADA is a civil rights law. It was designed to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to work, education, and their community.

### How does the ADA relate to older people?

As people get older, many start to develop problems with hearing, seeing, or getting around. Others experience chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, or memory loss. People may have disabilities under the definition in the ADA when age-related changes in function make it more difficult to get around at home, participate in their community, or go to work.

Although people who are aging often don't think of themselves as having a disability, according to the ADA, having a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity" means a person has a disability.

More than 30 percent of Americans over age 65 have some kind of disability, and over 50 percent of those over age 75. These may range from difficulties seeing and hearing to walking and thinking. Under the ADA, it isn't the cause of the disability that matters, but what it means in everyday life.

To read the legal definition of "disability," as stated in the ADA, see the following link: <https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada>

### What areas of life are included under the ADA?

#### Work

Employers may not discriminate against you because of your disability if you can do your job "with accommodation." An accommodation may be required

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to help employees with disabilities succeed in the workplace by making changes to the work environment or schedule, as long as it is not an “undue hardship” for the employer. For example, a person who is experiencing age-related vision loss can request a larger monitor or a screen reader to help them access their computer screen. Changes like this are called “reasonable accommodations.”

Many people continue to work past traditional retirement age. If you start having problems doing your job because of health or physical problems, you may be eligible under the ADA for workplace accommodations.

### **Transportation and Travel**

Public transportation, such as light rail, transit and busses, is required to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Taxi companies are required to provide accessible service. This means that transportation companies cannot refuse service if you use a mobility device such as a walker or a wheelchair.

People with disabilities have protections when flying, including the right to bring a service animal. Accessibility of the airport is covered under the ADA, but the accessibility of the airplane itself is covered under the Air Carrier Access Act:

<https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/passengers-disabilities>

### **Entertainment and Hospitality**

“Places of public accommodation” like restaurants, hotels, theaters, arenas, and museums must be physically accessible to individuals with disabilities. They must also provide “reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures” when requested, so long as it is not an undue burden to the business. For example, a person with some age-related vision loss may go to a restaurant and have difficulty reading the menu. If the customer requests assistance, the restaurant should provide a menu in a format that works for that person, such as large print, or should offer to read it aloud.

## **Health Care**

The ADA requires that health care providers, including medical facilities and dentists' offices, provide reasonable modifications to patients. The health care provider must provide assistance with communication if needed. This means that they may help you fill out a form or read small print in documents before you sign them. Health care providers must also ensure that you can access medical equipment. For example, they can provide exam tables that can move up and down to make it easier for patients to sit or lie down for examination.

## **Public places**

Public places and activities owned and controlled by state or local government like streets, sidewalks, parks, and government buildings are required to be accessible and they must provide requested reasonable modifications. For example, if a city is hosting a town hall meeting, they must ensure that there is an accessible entryway so that people who use mobility devices will be able to enter the building and participate.

## **Housing**

Accessibility in housing is covered under the Fair Housing Act, which is enforced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Fair Housing Act, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fair-housing-act-2>, applies to buildings with four or more units. Covered buildings must be physically accessible, according to the building code used by the state. In addition, housing providers must provide reasonable accommodations and modifications to tenants with disabilities. A housing provider might provide a designated parking space near the door of an apartment or modify its policies to allow a tenant to pay rent by mail as an accommodation.

## More information about the ADA

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance and training on the ADA, tailored to meet the needs of business, government, and individuals at local, regional, and national levels. You may contact your regional ADA Center by phone or email, or find more ADA resources on the ADA National Network's website.

Call: 1-800-949-4232

Website: <https://adata.org>

Email: <https://adata.org/content/email-us>

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<http://adata.org/ADAKTC>

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